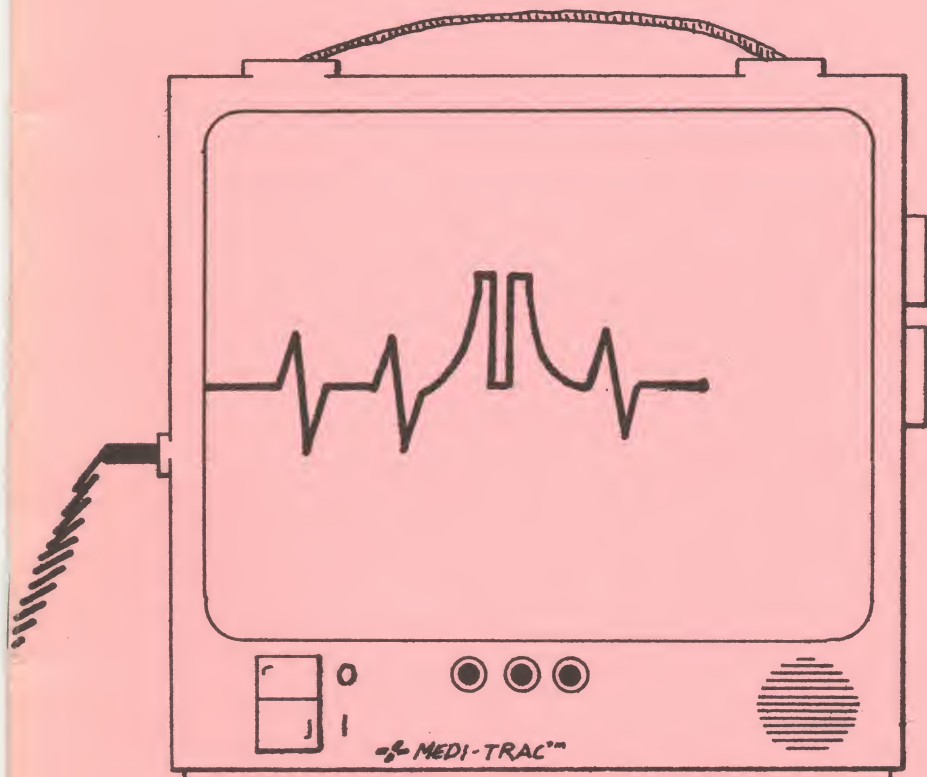# status

N E W S L E T T E R

VOLUME 6   NUMBER 2   FEBRUARY   1987

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Editor's File

RE: New Stuff

I'm reserving judgement on the Winter CES product announcements ATARI made (the Mega STs, the ATARI PC IBM compatible, etc.) until things progress a little further. After all, we've been hearing about the XM1201 for almost a year now, and have yet to see anything but a shell.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~
The IBM emulation box is NOT DEAD! [according to an ATARI spokesman]
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

An interesting side note to the XM1201 story: for the last month and a half, we've been hearing that the new modem has been available on the west coast (although no one's actually seen one). To further muddy the waters, in a recent GEnie Q&A conference, a spokesman for ATARI stated that the XM1201 was in the process of FCC testing, and that it would be available in the market place "in a few weeks".

How's that "Rumors" song go?

Another interesting tidbit to come from that GEnie conference, was the fact that the IBM emulation box is **NOT DEAD!** To quote the same spokesman:"...the PC was easier to do, so it got done first." Apparently, there's still hope...

Back on the home front

If you look at any recent membership list, you can't help but to be impressed with the number of members STATUS has... but if you look closer, you'll see that a large number of them are delinquent in there membership dues. What does this mean? Well, obviously the most important thing is, that it means the club is owed a fairly significant amount of money that the treasury could certainly find a use for. It also means that these people have been getting Newsletters, using the BBS and otherwise garnering services from the club (for free) that you pay for...

It seems the time has come to clean up our act, and the executive committee has formed a mechanism for doing just that. Starting this month, those members who have gone **one** month past their dues date will get a written notification alerting them to that fact. Those members who have gone **two** months past their dues date will have their passwords dropped from the STATUS BBS. Those members who have gone

THREE MONTHS past their dues date will be dropped from the club membership. That gives you **90 days** to clear up the situation, and **two** warnings. I think it's a fair system, and in the long run I think the club will be better for it. If you have any question as to your membership status (get it?) contact **Ron Johnson**, our membership chairman.

This Month

The recurring illness to my computer at work has made this a trying month for putting together the Newsletter, but it was made a little easier with the help of: Buck Maddrey, El Prez, and Tom Black. Tom has done something that a lot more of you are capable of... taking an article from another Newsletter and condensing it. NOT plagerize, but take the meat of the article and put it in a form we can all understand.

Home Computers: How Not To Mess Up Your Software
By Shelby Neely
Better Homes & Gardens

Careless handling can ruin any computer software. The most common villains are dust and dirt, especially for floppy disks and cassette tapes, whose magnetic surfaces are exposed. Improper storage, abrupt temperature changes, and equipment misuse can wreck software, too.

General Precautions

Handle disks and tapes carefully, never touching the magnetic surfaces. Oil from fingerprints may damage the surfaces as well as trap dust and lint.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~
Static not only attracts dust; it can also rearrange data on the software's surface...
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Avoid eating and drinking around computer equipment. Even if you don't have spills, fingertips can transmit drops of moisture or particles of food. Also watch out for pet hair, smoke, or anything else that could leave residue on the surface. Kerosene space heaters can do more damage than just residue, the fumes oxidize the solder connections of the computer equipment.

Keep windows closed when it's practical, reduce room traffic, and take care when cleaning near the computer.

Magnetic coatings on disks and tapes may be altered by fumes from nail polish, copy machine fluids, and the like. Magnetic objects can be dangerous, too. Don't place software on top of video screens, they emit both electromagnetic and radio frequency interference. Note: X rays won't damage software, but X-ray machine coils will, so avoid them in airports.

Static not only attracts dust; it can rearrange data on software surfaces. The humidity level in your computer room may run safely between 10 and 80 percent, but 50 percent is best. If possible, have tile flooring rather than carpeting in your computer room, wear leather-soled shoes, and use a desk with metal legs or casters. Anti-static mats and sprays may help too.

T h e   a c c e p t a b l e temperature range for use and storage of software is between 50 and 122 degrees Fahrenheit (60 to 80 is preferable). Avoid large, sunlit windows. Wait 24 hours before using software you've moved from a much warmer or cooler place.

Use Proper Equipment...
Properly

Blank tape cassettes and disks should be of the right quality and format for your equipment... single vs. double density disks, for example. Ask your dealer, refer to your owners manual [or better yet, **contact your local ATARI users group, ED**].

Learn the right sequence for powering up your system- such as whether you turn on your disk drive or the computer first. Otherwise, random data may appear on the disk.

Learn to "write-protect" disks and tapes to avoid accidental erasing of data. Ask your dealer for the appropriate tabs and how to apply them.

Always make backups of software that you don't want to risk losing. Use the backups and keep originals in safe storage.

Inspect disks and tapes periodically. It's normal after some usage for shiny rings to appear on a disk. However, very shiny wide rings and scratches or folds indicate damage. So do wrinkles, cracks, and warping of tapes. Make backups before matters get worse.

Floppy Disks: Your Biggest Risk

Most likely, any original material you create or records you want to store will be transferred to floppy disks, so treat the disks with special care.

Insert disks correctly; don't force. Hold them between your thumb and index finger, with the thumb on top of the label. Insert with label side up, or to the left if drives are installed vertically.

Never use both sides of a single-side disk. The automatic cleaning system inside the jackets won't function properly otherwise. Also, the flip side has not been guaranteed by the manufacturer.

Disks must be perfectly flat to be read properly; do not bend or fold.

Never use rubber bands or paper clips to hold disks together. Rubber bands can bend them, and paper clips may be magnetized.

Storage and Labeling Tips

Always store software in protective sleeves and cases. Never place two disks in the same sleeve.

Place disks vertically in plastic, not metal cases. Do not overcrowd containers, and avoid stacking.

Tapes last best when stored vertically, to prevent loosening. Rewind tapes properly; use extra caution when you're tightening them manually so you don't stretch them.

Prepare labels before application to disks. To change labels after application, use a soft felt-tip pen. A pencil or ballpoint pen may scratch disks or dislodge dust from jackets.

Do not erase labels on any kind of software; residue can become trapped on the magnetic surface. Instead replace the label.

Do not put labels on top of one another. A build up can jam in the disk drive or tape mechanism.

The Little Computer People Discovery Kit

Activision Inc.
P.O. Box 7287
Mountain View, Ca. 94039
ST $49.95
By BUCK MADDREY

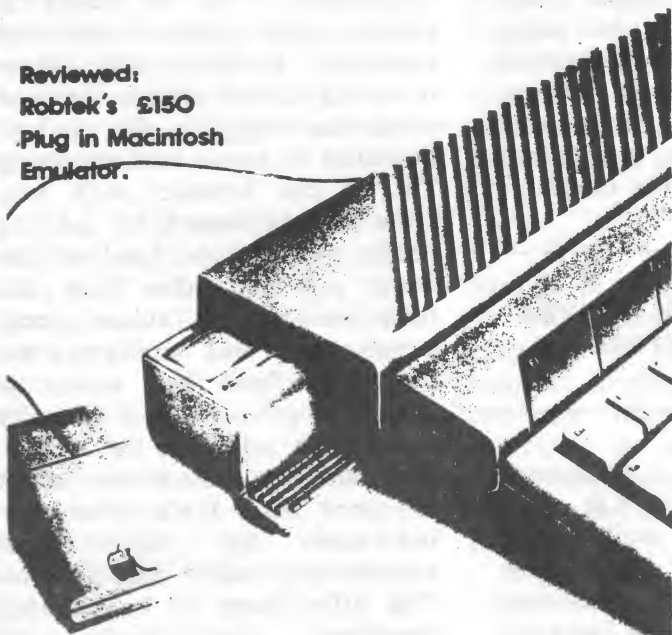Ever wonder why you keep getting errors saying the data on the disk may be damaged, the drive you

January 1987

STuser

ISSUE 11   A GOLLNER PUBLICATION   PRICE UK £1.95 CANADA $4.95 USA $3.95

Reviewed:
Robtek's £150
Plug in Macintosh
Emulator.

🔺 Logistix - Spreadsheet, Database, Business Graphics, plus forth dimension.
🔺 Flight Simulator II - Take off into the sky blue pixels of your colour monitor!
🔺 Programming - The start of a new series on Fast Basic

specified does not exist, or two or more "bombs" appear on your screen? Considering all the uninvited rodents and insects that inhabit each and every one of our homes, doesn't it just seem logical that someone or some thing could just as easily be using our computers for their homes? Suppose your favorite resting place suddenly became energized, wouldn't you bomb the screen or crash the disk?

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~
He has decided to move in... Good! Maybe now he'll stop crashing my screen.
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

The Little Computer People Discovery Kit, an original concept by well known programmer, David Crane, has been marketed by Activision Inc. This kit on a disk is designed to lure the Little Computer Person from the confines of your computer into a completely furnished three story house. Amenities include: TV, stereo, computer, well stocked bookcase and record collection, piano and a telephone. After booting the "house on a disk" you enter your name and the time, and sit back and wait for your LCP to visit. Just as any other perspective tenant, he checks it out with a fine tooth comb,

and then leaves. Soon he is back with his suitcase and his dog, he has decided to move in... Good! Maybe he won't bomb my screen anymore.

Ian moved in shortly after Christmas. He is really a unique little person. He does exercises regularly. He loves to do graphics demos on the computer and he also enjoys listening to music and watching TV. I can interact with him from the keyboard by leaving books, records, or food at the door. I can also ring his telephone, or his alarm clock. I make sure that he always has plenty of food and water or else he'll get sick and actually turn green and just lie in bed. His emotional needs also must be cared for. Ian's moods are indicated by his facial expressions, smiles and frowns. The gifts seem to booster his emotions. Occasionally he'll step up to the monitor glass and knock on it, from the inside of course, to get my attention.

He usually wants to play a game with me. He provides a list of games , Anagrams, Card War, 5 card Draw, Blackjack and Word puzzles, and asks me to select a game. He always insists on dealing and he CHEATS! I have yet to beat him at any of them.

He has written several letters to me on his typewriter but I haven't found out a lot about him yet because he doesn't respond specifically to my questions that I ask by typing to him from the keyboard. He has acknowledged my request to play the piano and to light a fire in the fireplace, and of course he is <u>always</u> ready to play games.

The graphics and animation are excellent, a clock on the wall actually keeps the correct time. The piano sound is very realistic and the sound effects are well implemented. You can hear the difference of footsteps on carpeted and non carpeted areas. Ian's telephone conversations are not understandable, but then, I really don't know what language he is speaking. It could be binary or machine language, anyway, I can't even make out a single word! The dog is very restless, he? (Ian hasn't told me his name yet) wanders from room to room and never seems to rest in one spot very long.

Little Computer People is an alternative choice for those of us who are tired of the joystick trashing games of the past. It is entertainment software, but with a new approach to the game concept.

Maybe you should consider the "House On A Disk" for that little person in your CPU.

XL/XE Power Supplies

Condensed From A.B.E'S A.C.E.S, August, 1986
By Jim Finley
Condensed By Tom Black
All technical information was obtained From Modern Electronics, May, 1986

Are you experiencing strange problems with your XL or XE system ever since you plugged in that new direct connect product? If so, don't put the blame on the new interface or modem until you have first ruled out the power supply as the source of the problem.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~
...one of the four models was filled with epoxy, which makes repairs impossible...
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

It seems the XE computers are being shipped with a lighter duty power supply that may not be able to provide sufficient power for both the computer and a direct connect product that relies on the computer as it's only source of power such as the ATARI XM-301 modem. This

new power supply can pose another problem that is more serious such as frying your computer if the pass transistor should suffer a short between the emitter and collector. It seems that this causes the power supply to apply a full ten volts to your computer. Although this is unlikely to happen, I for one, do not wish to test the odds.

If you have an inoperative power supply for your XL or XE computer, the remainder of this article may be of interest to you. There are four different power supplies that ATARI has distributed since the introduction of the XL series computers. The first three types were a bit more hefty than the newest model. Repair information is available from the original article, which should be available from the STATUS librarian. It provides pinouts, specifications, and other technical information on these power supplies that could be quite valuable if you are attempting to make your own repairs.

I must mention that one of the four models was filled with epoxy which makes repair impossible. Even more unfortunate is the fact that this epoxy filled unit was the most widely distributed to date. Repairs on the remaining three

types are rated from easy to tedious. Anyone with a moderate amount of ability should be able to make any necessary repairs without any major problems. This additional information should be all that you need to stay ahead of the game and contains information on identifying which type of power supply you have as well the technical specifications needed to make the repair.

Fixing the XL/XE Keyboard

By Tom Black
Original Article and Concept By
Joe Kasper, Peter Kurth and
Steve Armstrong
Milwaukee Area ATARI Users
Group: August, 1986

If any of the following symptoms are found to be present on your ATARI XL or XE series computer, the following repair procedure can be accomplished to resolve your problem.

Symptom Checklist

1) Your POWER ON LED indicator lights dimly or fails to illuminate at all.
2) Your function keys such as HELP, START, SELECT, OPTION, or SYSTEM RESET fail to operate.

3) Any character or group of character keys fails to operate.

If any of the above symptoms occur on your computer, clear an area to go to work on your machine, after gathering the tools and supplies you will need. To make the repair properly you will need the following:

Parts List

A) Masking tape
B) Round point wooden toothpick (several)
C) Medium size phillips head screwdriver
D) Small phillips head screwdriver
E) Small container to hold screws
F) Good quality ohmmeter or continuity tester SEE NOTE #1
G) Magnifying glass
H) Desk lamp or other good light source
I) LOCKTITE(tm) QUICK GRID Rear Window Defogger Repair Kit P/N 15067

NOTE #1: If you are going to use this ohmmeter for other repairs to your computer, use only a good quality high impedence unit. **Never** use a low impedence Ohmmeter or ANY continuity tester on internal components of your computer.

NOTE #2: CAUTION! Before beginning ANY Disassembly Always disconnect all power sources to prevent accidental electrical shock!

All the above with the exception of the window defogger repair kit should be available at home, or from a friend. The defogger repair kit can be purchased at your local auto parts store for around seven dollars. This is considerably less expensive than the replacement cost of the keyboard's plastic membrane (if you are fortunate enough to find one).

The Big Fix

The repair procedure begins by removing the four retaining screws located on the underside of the computer with the larger of the two phillips head screwdrivers. Then gently lift the half containing the keyboard up. Looking inside, you will notice the piece of plastic film that is plugged into a connector socket mounted on the circuit board. Remove the film from the socket by gently pulling it up and away from the connection point. The half of the case containing the circuit board can now be set aside. It will not be needed until you are ready for reassembly the following day. After inverting the keyboard

you will notice approximately twenty small phillips head screws. These must be removed in order to gain access to all of the plastic film. Place the screws in the dish after removing them. Lift the metal cover plate off of the keyboard and set it aside.

This is Only a Test

Now is the time to examine the narrow strips of conductive coating that cover the plastic film in an intricate pattern. Observe which side of the plastic film contains the the actual conductive coating. A break in this coating is cause of the keyboard malfunction. You should observe with care as to the position of the plastic film so you will be able to replace it during reassembly in the same position as it was removed. Carefully examine the plastic film for cracks in the coating. Any suspicious areas can then be verified by testing for continuity with the ohmmeter or continuity tester. You should look for the defects in the vicinity of the malfunctioning key. Another suspect area to check is at the bend where the film inserts into the circuit board socket. When the line with the break is isolated, the actual repair can made. Mask off the damaged area to prevent the conductive resin from going where it is not wanted. The tape mask should isolate the bad line from others nearby or parallel to it. Apply several coatings of the conductive resin to the affected area. Recheck the line for continuity after several coatings have been applied. If necessary, use the toothpick to insure the paint is in the place intended for it. The resin coating should be allowed to dry overnight.

The next day place the plastic film over the guide pins of the keyboard's reverse side in the same manner in which it was removed. Replace the metal plate and fasten it with the twenty screws. When you are satisfied that that your keyboard assembly has been reassembled properly, plug the film into the socket on the circuit board with care. Replace the four case screws and test the keyboard. If you have followed the directions and worked carefully, everything should work without a hitch, and to think you did it yourself!!!

Presidents Column

My Thanks to our Vice President Nip Harrison for the fine job he did during my absence. And a special thanks goes out to Kent Irwin for his support of the ATARI community here in the Tidewater area. We will be presenting him a plaque for his outstanding service... it shows THEY CARE about the customers....

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~
...we are now over 200 strong, and still have just a handful of active members...
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Sysop Doug Boynton continues to provide an outstanding service with the STATUS BBS... Our BBS recently upgraded to a hard disk system with Express BBS as it's operating system, the 20 meg, hard disk system was obtained thru INTERFACE, again thanks to Kent Irwin...

I've been out of town for the last few months and during this time our group has grown by leaps and bounds we are now over 200 strong and still we have just a hand full of active members, people who volunteer at the call for assistance, com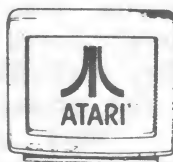e on folks this organization will only fuction properly if we provide the catalyst, and not just a caretaker few... be active, help support STATUS... Our elections will be coming up in March, this is the time to let your feelings be heard by the rest of the group... speak up and decided, your vote will count.

As of this date (13 Feb 87) Atari stock is at 25.75, who would have thought back in November that an issue at 11.50 would be up to 25 four months later?

...darn it!!

Promises, Promises... Atari MEGA ST's, ATARI PC's(IBM Compatable), in MARCH no less, sure hope it's not VAPOR HARDWARE... A question asked: will ATARI be able to provide SERVICE/SUPPORT for these MEGA/ATARI PC, or will the USER GROUPS be expected to pick up the slack (We seem to be doing that right now!!)

I'll Close for now and look forward to your participation and cooperation.

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Meetings: STATUS meetings are held on the first and third Thursdays of the month at the 7-UP Bottling Company, 5700 Ward Avenue, in Virginia Beach at 7:30 p.m. All interested parties are welcome to attend.

Newsletter Articles:

Submitted articles are preferred as disk text files, but will be greatfully accepted as hard copy (including handwriting) if you do not have a disk drive. If you have a modem, you can upload your articles to the Editor by calling the STATUS BBS at 468-1096. Articles may be submitted at any time, but will probably not make that month's Newsletter if submitted less than one week prior to the first meeting of the month.

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